

2023 NCAA Wrestling Championship

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Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Parker Keckeisen

Finals Media Conference



PARKER KECKEISEN: I just want to thank God for the opportunity. He's blessed me with great parents, okay sisters, great teammates and, I don't know, great coaches. Great leaders, great acts to follow. I'm just grateful, grateful for God.

Q. So you talked last night about wrestling the same guy. Used to hate it and then you realized you're not wrestling the same person. So what was the game plan going in knowing that he had felt some of your pressures and some of the things you do well, as well as stopping him from getting into his offense?

PARKER KECKEISEN: He got that one lefty high crotch. So that wasn't a game plan, but it was just a weakness in my wrestling that we found out and got better at.

After the first time we wrestled he took me down there. And then I just -- I don't know -- Roper told me my offense is better than his defense. Just try to get the legs.

Like I said, the amount of finish work we've done -- right, guys? Finish work, finish on edge, is a lot. So get to where we're good at. That was the game plan.

Q. Could you talk about the historical perspective that this has on the Northern Iowa program? And 2019 was the last time. That's when they were recruiting you or you were a true freshman. What was happening back then that you liked about UNI?

PARKER KECKEISEN: Well, Lee Roper and Doug Schwab. Lee Roper, he's a lot like Max, my co-coach technique guy, technician, loved the sport -- not saying that the other coaches don't love the sport. But they clicked.

And Doug Schwab would be icing plus a cherry plus a thousand cherries on top because that's what Doug Schwab is. He's just so awesome. And you know how he cares about us being better people than wrestlers.

This is cool, but this is just a day on the calendar. It's like

how am I going to be there the other 364 days.

They had a national -- Doug said that at one of our homecoming practices. I committed before Drew won it. I want to put it out there.

When Drew won it, it almost secured my thought process. It's like, dang, you can win here. I was planning on winning here. But it was like, dude, you can win here. Seeing Drew do that was super, super cool.

And I remember being in my buddy, Brandon's basement, watching him win. Super cool. I'm, like, dang, that's awesome. And I get to wrestle with Drew. He's a great role model. He took me down to Big 12s my freshman year. He's a blessing.

Q. Five-for-five bonus wins, first Northern Iowa undefeated national champion since 1963. What's that mean to you?

PARKER KECKEISEN: After our last dual, me and Ropes sat down, we put a goal to try to bonus everyone through the beginning of the year. That eased my mind. It's just proof that when you write stuff down you can achieve it. And when you do -- we did this whole thing, it was like how does this lead bleed into being a national champ bonusing your way? Even one of them was trying to call my parents and call my girlfriend, be over-communicated, and how that can all bleed into bonusing everyone.

So it was super cool. I think I don't know how -- I think I realized my freshman year how historic UNI wrestling is, because, I didn't really know that, but we have Olympians in the room, who went through the room. So it's super cool.

Q. So you talked about finishing on the edge of the mat. To start out the beginning of the season you wrestled Bernie Truax, who continued to stick his foot off the edge of the mat. And you were ultra frustrated until you got the final takedown at the all star. How much did that bleed into your training of finishing on the mat? And ultimately knowing it was going to be a similar situation, where you're going to have a carpet



and a rug that's very close to the edge of the mat, and make sure you work on your takedowns there?

PARKER KECKEISEN: I want to thank Bernie Truax for that because he exposed a hole in my game. And Tyrell Gordon, he's a heavyweight, but he's really flexible and can give that feel like Bernie. So going with him, and it was just opportunity to almost sharpen the blade in my finish work.

Yeah, like I said, we do finish work on the edge twice, three times a week. We do match closeouts three times a week. I don't know, Doug Schwab, he puts us in those situations that are going to happen in the room.

It happened out there in real life. It's super awesome. I'm prepared for that moment. I'm prepared to go -- one of my match closeouts was go get a bonus. 30 seconds left, you've got to go get bonus.

It's, like, just putting yourself in those situations in the practice room and making it real, bringing -- where are we? -- bring Kansas City into the room. So we tried to bring Kansas City into the mat room every night.

Q. You mentioned you'll be coming back for the extra COVID year. I know you want to celebrate now, but how much does this bleed into next year and trying to improve on it? And how do you build off of this?

PARKER KECKEISEN: You've got to get better each day. I'm sure there's flaws in my game that -- sorry, I'm watching that match -- there's flaws in the game that I need to get better at. And I'm sure we'll watch film -- I'm sure we'll watch film and we'll try to get better each and every day.

Yeah, goals are cool. But I think they're -- I need a word -- word check -- I think they're the outcome, they're the outcome of daily habits. So I'm just going to try to get better each day -- at wrestling or get better in my faith, get better.

That's kind of my goal for the day. If I'm not growing, I'm dying. If I'm not getting better off this tournament, what's the point? So it's like I've got to get better. I've got to get better. We're going to get better. Probably back in the room probably not Monday but Tuesday. Right?

Q. About a month ago there was a sumo match at the McLeod Center between two relatives. Did you have any advice for the losers?

PARKER KECKEISEN: I don't know -- well, Hannah, Hannah is the most athletic person in the family, right, Dad? That sumo match, I wish I went out and watched it.

But I got to see video. Emma was a college athlete. So is Hannah. But you had to get low to get those girls off their feet, bro, in soccer. But shout-out, Hannah, Dad's favorite.

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